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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6115
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June 13, 2016

Mr. Joel Beauvais
Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Water
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Beauvais,

On August 8, 2015, the Drinking Water Protection Act became Public Law 114-45. It requires the Agency to develop a strategic plan for assessing and managing risks associated with algal toxins in drinking water provided by public water systems. The initial plan, which is to be periodically updated, was delivered to Congress in November 2015.

As we move into the summer months, increased amounts of algae and possible algal toxins are appearing in lakes, rivers, and streams – some of which serve as source water for public drinking water systems. We would appreciate an update on the progress EPA is making in this area. Please respond to the following questions:

1. Since release of the initial plan last November, what steps have been completed, what progress has been made and knowledge gained, and what is currently planned for:
   a. identifying gaps in the Agency's understanding of algal toxins;
   b. evaluating the risk to human health from drinking water contaminated with algal toxins;
   c. establishing, publishing, and updating a comprehensive list of algal toxins that may have an adverse effect on human health, taking into account likely exposure levels;
   d. summarizing the known adverse human health effects of algal toxins and the factors that cause toxin-producing cyanobacteria and algae to grow rapidly and make toxins;
   e. establishing guidance regarding feasible analytical methods to quantify the presence of algal toxins and guidance regarding the frequency of monitoring necessary to determine if the algal toxins are present;
   f. recommending feasible treatment options, including procedures, equipment, and source water protection practices; and
   g. entering into cooperative agreements with, and provide technical assistance to, affected states and public water systems to manage risks associated with algal toxins.

2. In Appendix 3 of the Agency's November 2015 Strategic Plan for Algal Toxin Assessment, the Agency mentioned its work on Reducing Impacts of Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB), for its 2016-2019 research cycle. What progress has been made as part of this effort to:
   a. improve the science of HAB and toxin detection by developing HAB-specific analytical methods and sampling strategies;
   b. assist the National Water Program in developing new HAB indicators, sampling designs, and protocols for use in national-scale assessments;
   c. develop improved approaches to understanding the interactive effects of increasing water temperatures and nutrient loads on HAB development and toxin production;
   d. develop improved models to project risk of HABs under warming climate scenarios;
   e. improve understanding of the human health and ecosystem effects resulting from toxin exposure; and
   f. provide drinking water treatment system operators with improved methods for detecting and treating toxins in order to limit or prevent human exposures.

3. What is the role of stakeholders (including States and drinking water systems) in working with the Agency to improve scientific information and tools to assess, predict, and manage the risk of HABs, associated toxicity events, and the ensuing ecological, economic and health impacts? Has the Agency found the stakeholders cooperative in trying to address its objectives on this issue?

Thank you for you expeditious attention to this matter. Please respond by June 20, 2016. If you have any questions, please contact David McCarthy or Jerry Couri of the Committee Staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,

Fred Upton
Chairman

John Shimkus
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy

Bob Latta
Member